



Commission takes action to improve lifelong learning and employability

Brussels, 10 December 2021

At the Porto Social Summit in May, EU Leaders welcomed the EU-level target of 60% of all adults taking part in training every year by 2030. Today, the Commission has taken an important step in helping Member States meet this target by presenting proposals for Council Recommendations on individual learning accounts and on micro-credentials, as announced in the [Skills Agenda](#) and in the [European Education Area Communication](#) of 2020.

A strong skill set opens up opportunities to individuals, provides a safety net in uncertain times, promotes inclusion and social advancement and provides the economy with the skilled labour force needed to grow and innovate. The success of both the digital and green transitions depends on workers with the right skills. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the need for reskilling and upskilling of workforce to adapt to the changing labour market and meet demand in different sectors.

However, too few people participate in regular learning activities after their initial education and training, as they often lack financial resources or time to improve and learn new skills or are not aware of learning opportunities and their benefits. For example, a certain level of digital skills is required in over 90% of current jobs and in nearly all sectors, yet only 56% of adults had basic digital skills in 2019.

The two new proposals adopted today on individual learning accounts and on micro-credentials will help tackle these challenges by opening up more opportunities for people to find learning offers, and employment opportunities.

Individual Learning Accounts

The Commission proposal aims to ensure that everyone has access to relevant training opportunities that are tailored to their needs, throughout life and independently of whether currently employed or not.

To that end, the proposed Council Recommendation is addressing the main bottlenecks for people to embark on training today - motivation, time and funding - by asking Member States together with social partners to:

- set up individual learning accounts and provide training entitlements for all adults of working age;
- define a list of labour-market relevant and quality-assured training that is eligible for funding from the individual learning accounts and make it accessible through a digital registry, for example from a mobile device;
- offer opportunities of career guidance and validation of previously acquired skills, as well as paid training leave.

The innovative aspect of this proposal is that it puts the individual directly at the centre of skills development. It also calls on Member States to modulate funding according to individuals' needs for training.

Micro-credentials

Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes following a small learning experience (e.g. a short course or training). They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development.

The Commission proposal seeks to make micro-credentials work across institutions, businesses, sectors and borders. To that end, Member States should agree on:

- a common definition of micro-credentials;
- standard elements for their description; and
- key principles for their design and issuance.

The aim is to ensure that micro-credentials are of high quality and issued in a transparent way to build trust in what they certify. This should support the use of micro-credentials by learners, workers and job seekers who can benefit from them. The proposal also introduces recommendations on micro-credentials in education and training and in labour markets policies. This should enable people to learn new or additional skills in a tailored way, inclusive for all. The European approach to micro-credentials is a key flagship to achieve a [European Education Area by 2025](#). They can be part of the learning offer included in individual learning accounts.

Members of the College said:

Margaritis **Schinas**, Vice-President for Promoting the European Way of Life, said: *"Skills and competence development are key to a successful career, inclusion and integration. They help people to adapt to change, thrive and contribute. Skills are also crucial for growth. Today's proposals ensure that education can take place at any time in life, and that it is flexible and accessible for all. This is a great step to include more people in learning and training opportunities, leaving no one behind."*

Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"To ensure a fair transition, it is vital that everyone has access to flexible, modular and accessible learning and training opportunities, regardless of their personal circumstances. The European approach to micro-credentials will facilitate the recognition and validation of these learning experiences. It will strengthen the role of higher education, vocational education and training institutions in making lifelong learning a reality across the EU, and foster their accessibility to a more diverse group of learners."*

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas **Schmit**, said: *"Education and training should not stop when you leave the school gates. Now more than ever, people need to develop their skillsets throughout their professional lives to meet the demands of a fast changing labour market. The Commission's proposals on individual learning accounts and micro-credentials will help us meet the target set in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan of 60% of all adults taking part in training every year by 2030. We must get serious about lifelong learning in Europe. It is the best investment and is positive for workers, employers and the economy as a whole."*

Next Steps

The proposals will be negotiated with Member States. Once adopted by the Council, the Commission will support Member States, social partners and relevant partners in implementing these Council Recommendations. The reporting and monitoring for individual learning accounts will be done as part of the European Semester cycle.

Background

The right to education, training and lifelong learning is enshrined in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (principle 1). All people should have continuous access to quality education and training and a selection of opportunities for skills development reflecting their needs at all times. Skills are the building blocks of individuals' success in an ever-changing labour market and society.

At the [Porto Social Summit](#) and the June European Council, leaders welcomed the 2030 EU headline targets set by the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. This includes the target of 60% of all adults taking part in training every year by 2030. This is part of the headline targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. However, as of 2016, only 37% are engaged in yearly training every year with small growth rates registered before. If those trends continue, the set ambitions will not be achieved, which is why these initiatives proposals on as the individual learning accounts and micro-credentials are important. The proposals put forward today invite Member States to work in partnership with social partners and the interested parties concerned to make upskilling and reskilling a reality for all.

The proposals for a Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts and for a Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability are the last of the twelve flagship actions announced in the [European Skills Agenda](#) and the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#). The European approach to micro-credentials is also a key flagship to [achieve a European Education Area by 2025](#).

For More Information

[Q&A: ILA and micro-credentials](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts](#)

[Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and](#)

[employability](#)

[European Skills Agenda](#)

[European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

[Communication on achieving a European Education Area by 2025](#)

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